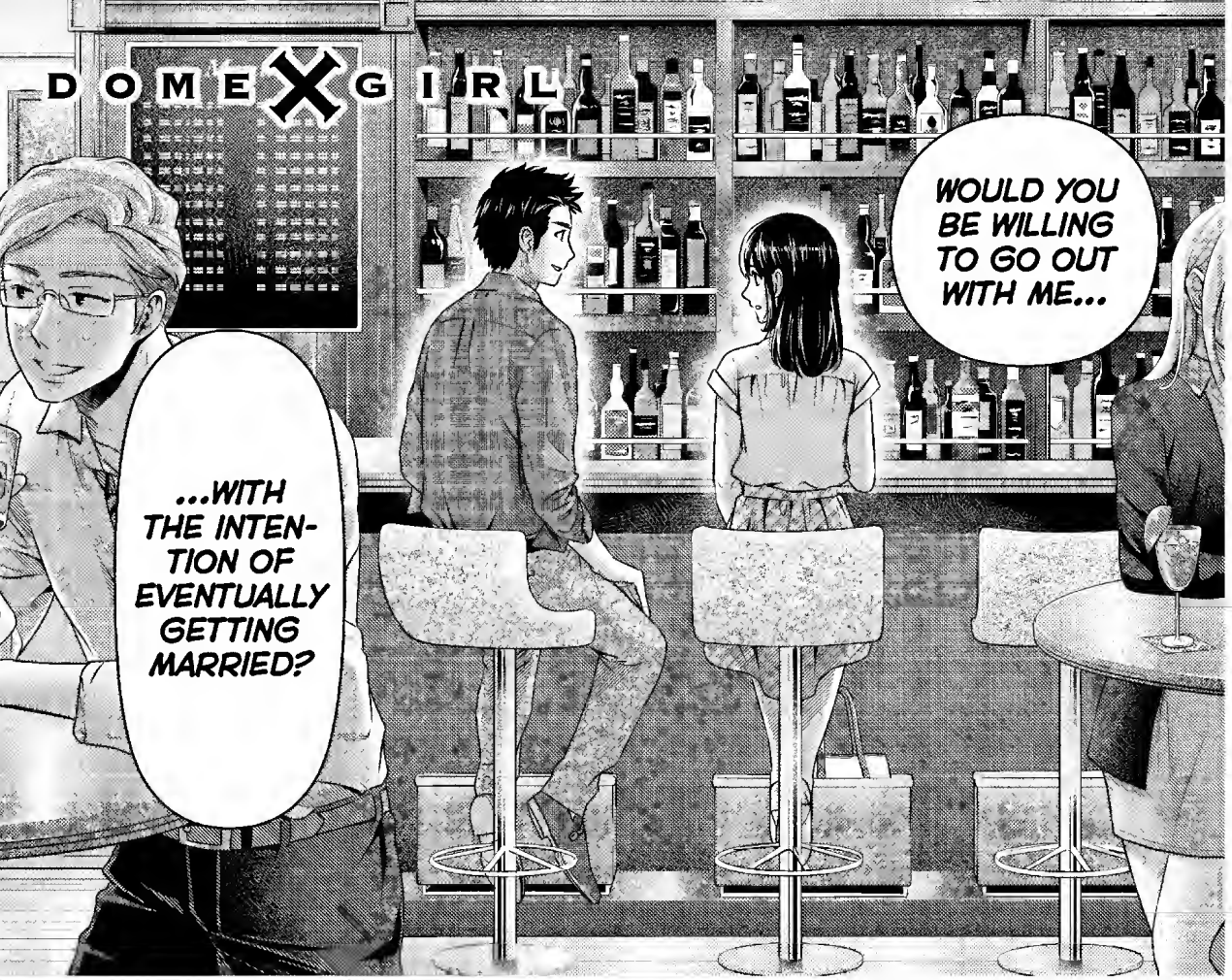
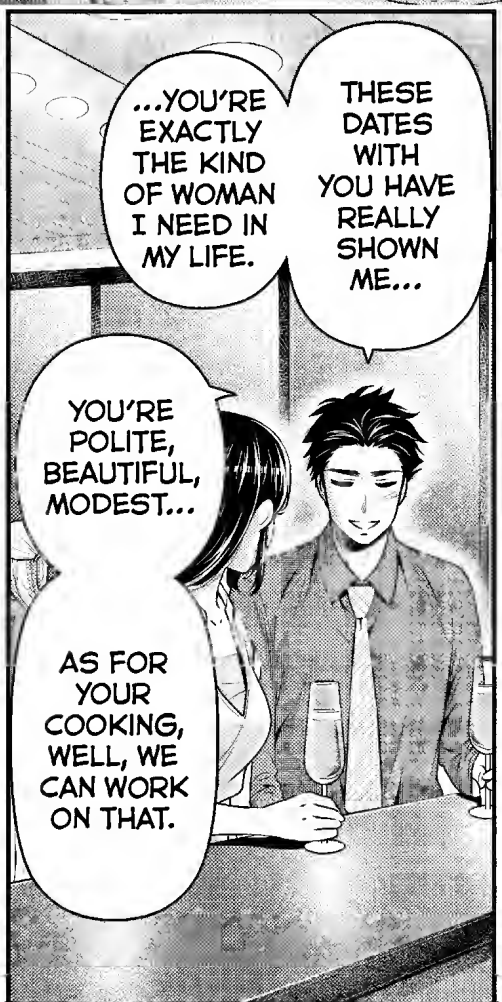
CHAPTER 174

KEI SASUGA

KODANSHA COMICS

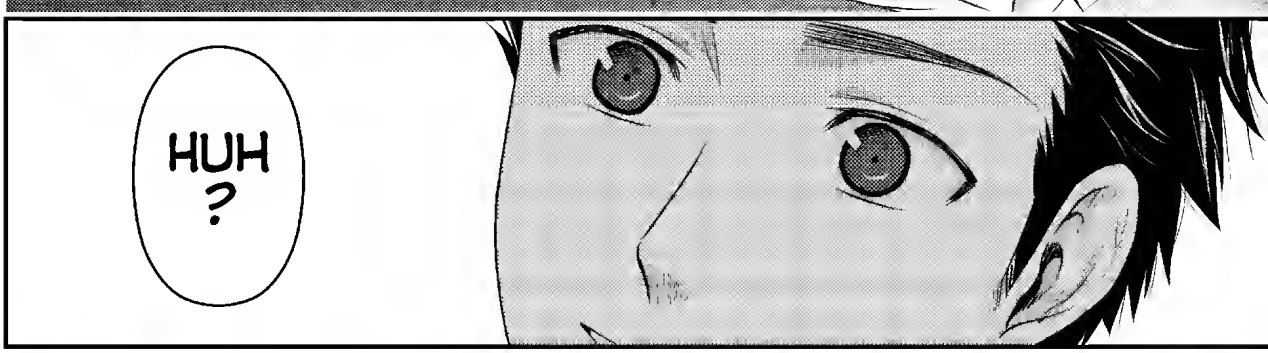


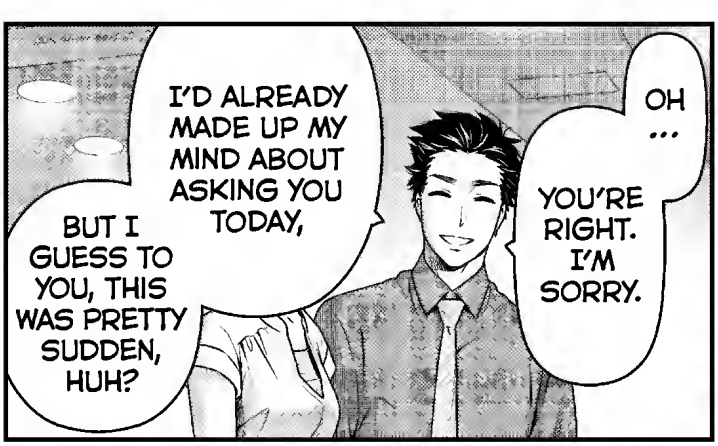

THESE DATES WITH YOU HAVE REALLY SHOWN ME...
...YOU'RE EXACTLY THE KIND OF WOMAN I NEED IN MY LIFE.
YOU'RE POLITE, BEAUTIFUL, MODEST...
AS FOR YOUR COOKING, WELL, WE CAN WORK ON THAT.

CHAPTER 174:
UNFORGETTABLE LOVE

KEI SASUGA

BUT ...
MAY I...
...HAVE SOME TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT, PLEASE?


HUH?


OH ...
YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M SORRY.
I'D ALREADY MADE UP MY MIND ABOUT ASKING YOU TODAY,
BUT I GUESS TO YOU, THIS WAS PRETTY SUDDEN, HUH?

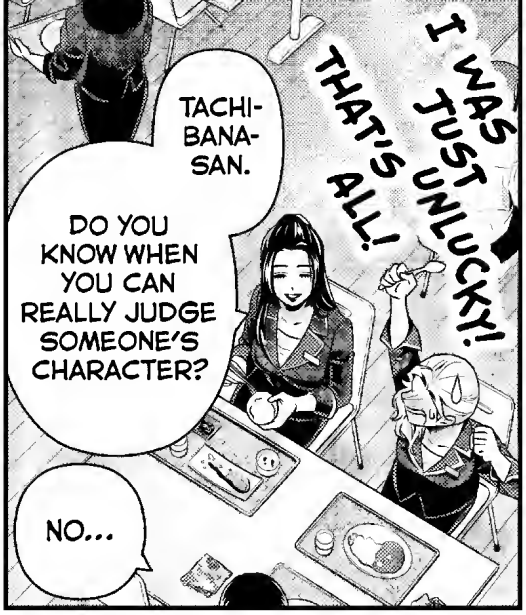
UM...
SORRY. I'M JUST A LITTLE SURPRISED.
I WASN'T REALLY PREPARED TO HEAR ALL THIS.

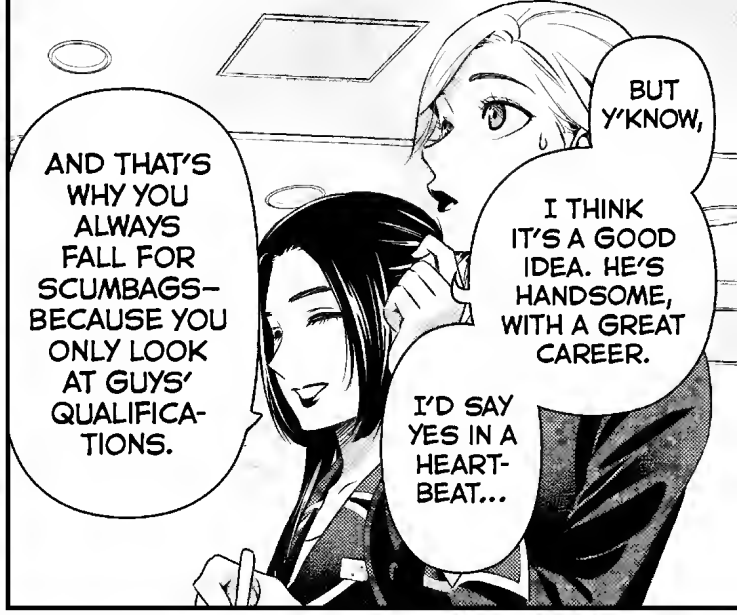
I SUPPOSE I TOOK YOUR COMING HERE TONIGHT AS A KIND OF GREEN LIGHT.
AT ANY RATE,
I'VE TOLD YOU HOW I FEEL.

PLEASE ...
...THINK OVER IT CARE-FULLY.
Tachibana
HEY. DOESN'T TACHIBANA-CHAN SEEM DOWN?
SHE'S WORKING JUST FINE,
BUT HER VOICE SOUNDS KINDA LIFELESS.

YOU JUST NOTICED?
I REALIZED SOMETHING WAS UP TWO DAYS AGO.
FOR REAL?! TELL ME!
HAS SHE TOLD YOU ANY-THING?
NOPE.
THOUGH I DON'T THINK IT'S RIGHT TO PRY JUST BECAUSE WE'RE HER SENIORS.
ERG ...
WELL, YEAH, BUT...
IS SOME-THING WRONG?
HUH?
WELL, YOU'VE SEEMED KINDA DOWN THE PAST FEW DAYS,
SO, Y'KNOW
I KNEW SHE COULDN'T HELP HERSELF.
SORRY ... I HAVE?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLO-GIZE!
I WAS JUST A LITTLE WORRIED. THAT'S ALL.

WITH MARRIAGE AS A STRONG POSSIBILITY.
I WAS OFFICIALLY ASKED OUT THE OTHER DAY.
IF SOMETHING'S BOTHERING YOU,
THEN FEEL FREE TO TALK TO US. MAYBE WE CAN HELP.
OH...
WHY? NOT SO HOT ON THE IDEA?
BUT THAT'S WHAT'S GOT YOU DOWN, HUH?
WOW, SO HE BASICALLY POPPED THE QUESTION!
YES.
HUH...? YOU MEAN BY THE GUY YOUR MOM SET YOU UP WITH?!
THAT'S GREAT!
I JUST CAN'T FIND THE COURAGE TO COMMIT YET.
THEN AGAIN, IT'S NOT LIKE I HAVE ANYONE ELSE IN MY LIFE.
WELL, IT'S A HUGE COMMITMENT TO MAKE.
DON'T GET ME WRONG, HE'S A NICE PERSON.
I GUESS...
...YOU COULD SAY THAT. I'M STILL NOT QUITE READY TO TAKE THAT STEP.
BUT TO BE HONEST, I'M NOT SURE IF I WANT TO BE WITH HIM FOREVER.


TACHI-BANA-SAN.
DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU CAN REALLY JUDGE SOMEONE'S CHARACTER?
NO...
I WAS JUST UNLUCKY! THAT'S ALL!

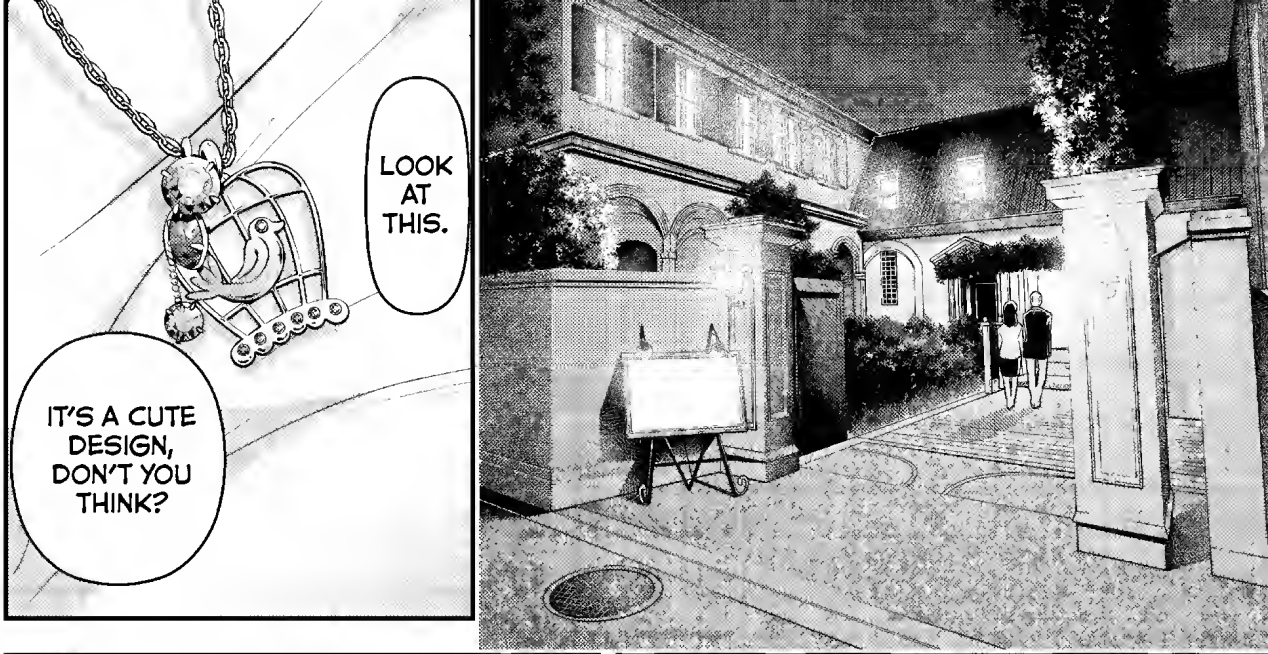

AND THAT'S WHY YOU ALWAYS FALL FOR SCUMBAGS— BECAUSE YOU ONLY LOOK AT GUYS' QUALIFICA-TIONS.
I'D SAY YES IN A HEART-BEAT...
BUT Y'KNOW,
I THINK IT'S A GOOD IDEA. HE'S HANDSOME, WITH A GREAT CAREER.

WHEN THINGS DON'T GO THEIR WAY.

OR THE TYPE TO THROW A TANTRUM?
ARE THEY THE TYPE TO CALMLY ASSESS THE SITUA-TION?
BUT PEOPLE TEND TO SHOW THEIR TRUE COLORS WHEN THEY DON'T GET WHAT THEY WANT.
DO THEY JUST SHRUG IT OFF AND WALK AWAY?
OR DO THEY GET SOUR AND TRY TO MANIPULATE PEOPLE?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
ANYONE CAN ACT NICE WHEN THEY'RE CALM AND COMPOSED.

YOU SHOULD TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT HOW HE ACTS DURING THE TIME LEADING UP TO YOUR DECISION.
IT'LL GIVE YOU AN IDEA OF WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE FUTURE.
GOOD WORK TODAY!
I'M TAKING OFF.
HINA-SAN!
HEY, THERE!


LOOK AT THIS.
IT'S A CUTE DESIGN, DON'T YOU THINK?

DON'T SAY THAT.
OH, NO... I CAN'T ACCEPT THIS...
NO NEED TO BE MODEST. PLEASE, TAKE IT.

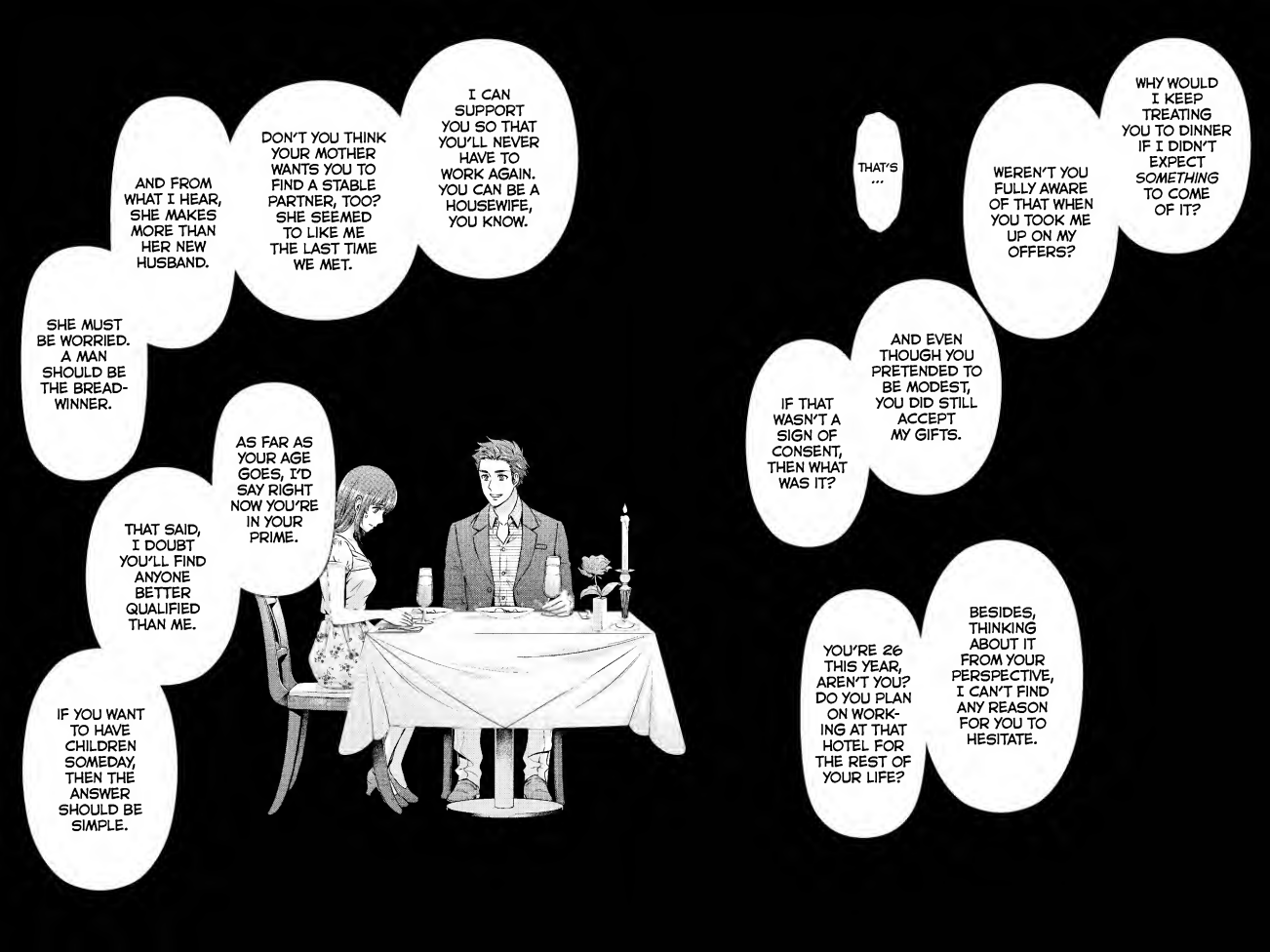
I SNAGGED IT UP BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT'D LOOK PERFECT ON YOU.
WHY DON'T YOU TRY IT ON?

...
I'VE...
...BEEN PUTTING A LOT OF THOUGHT INTO IT SINCE THEN...

I TAKE IT YOU'RE FINALLY READY...
...TO GIVE ME YOUR ANSWER?

...
SO...

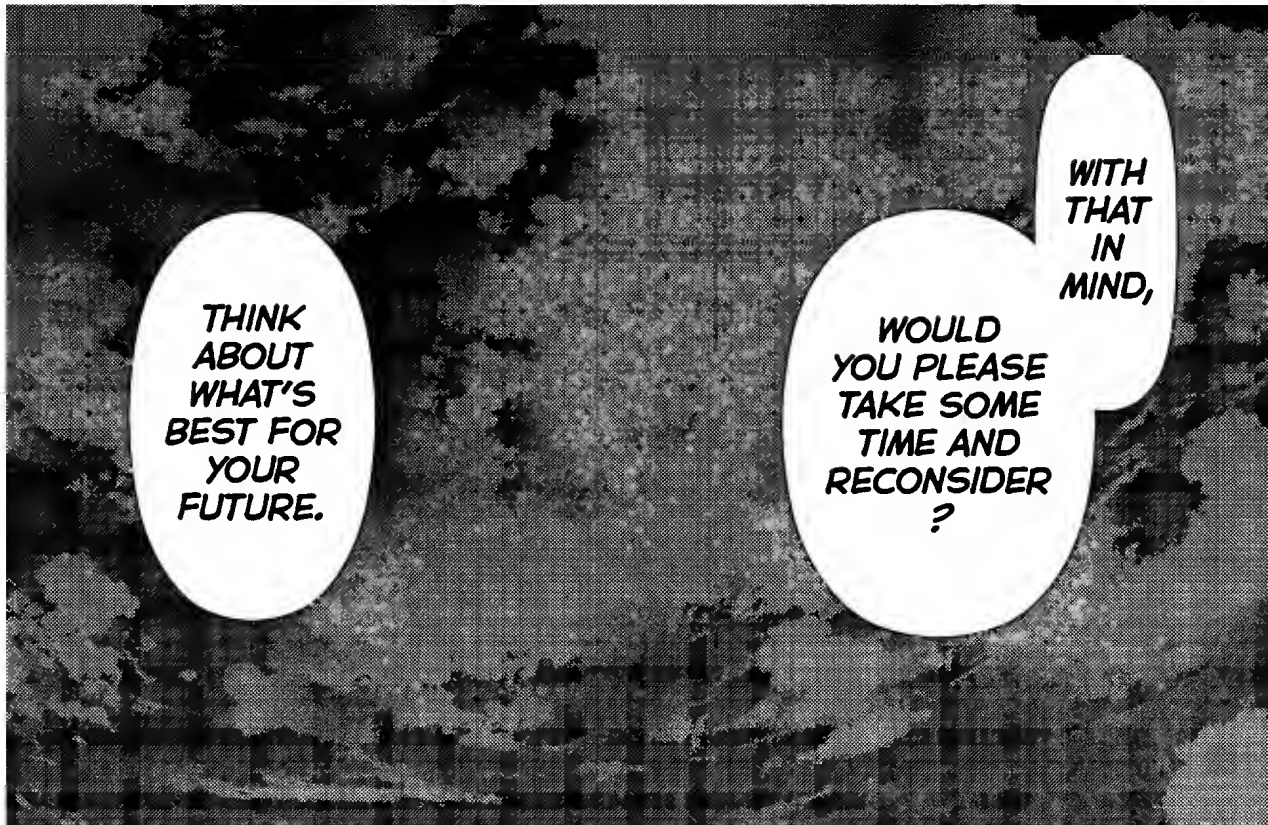
SO, UM,
I'M NOT READY TO COMMIT TO MARRIAGE.
NOT YET ...
BUT...
...WE HAVEN'T KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR VERY LONG YET.
HUH ...?
IF YOU HAD BEEN, THEN YOU WOULDN'T HAVE COME TO A VAGUE CONCLUSION LIKE "NOT YET."
FOR STARTERS, WE WERE SET UP TOGETHER WITH AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE IN MIND. SURELY YOU KNEW IT WOULD COME UP EVENTUALLY, RIGHT?
DID YOU AGREE TO KEEP SEEING ME EVEN THOUGH YOU HAD NO INTENTION OF GETTING MARRIED?
AM I JUST A TICKET TO A FREE MEAL TO YOU?
NO ...!
IN OTHER WORDS, YOU HAVEN'T BEEN THINKING ABOUT AT ALL, HAVE YOU?


I CAN SUPPORT YOU SO THAT YOU'LL NEVER HAVE TO WORK AGAIN. YOU CAN BE A HOUSEWIFE, YOU KNOW.
DON'T YOU THINK YOUR MOTHER WANTS YOU TO FIND A STABLE PARTNER, TOO? SHE SEEMED TO LIKE ME THE LAST TIME WE MET.
AND FROM WHAT I HEAR, SHE MAKES MORE THAN HER NEW HUSBAND.
SHE MUST BE WORRIED. A MAN SHOULD BE THE BREAD-WINNER.
AS FAR AS YOUR AGE GOES, I'D SAY RIGHT NOW YOU'RE IN YOUR PRIME.
THAT SAID, I DOUBT YOU'LL FIND ANYONE BETTER QUALIFIED THAN ME.
IF YOU WANT TO HAVE CHILDREN SOMEDAY, THEN THE ANSWER SHOULD BE SIMPLE.
WHY WOULD I KEEP TREATING YOU TO DINNER IF I DIDN'T EXPECT *SOMETHING* TO COME OF IT?
THAT'S ...
WEREN'T YOU FULLY AWARE OF THAT WHEN YOU TOOK ME UP ON MY OFFERS?
AND EVEN THOUGH YOU PRETENDED TO BE MODEST, YOU DID STILL ACCEPT MY GIFTS.
IF THAT WASN'T A SIGN OF CONSENT, THEN WHAT WAS IT?
BESIDES, THINKING ABOUT IT FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, I CAN'T FIND ANY REASON FOR YOU TO HESITATE.
YOU'RE 26 THIS YEAR, AREN'T YOU? DO YOU PLAN ON WORK-ING AT THAT HOTEL FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE?

I WAS EXPECTING A GOOD ANSWER TODAY,
SO I GUESS I GOT A LITTLE WORKED UP.
SORRY ABOUT THAT. I KINDA RAMBLED ON, DIDN'T I?

...
... OH!

STILL ...
THAT JUST GOES TO SHOW HOW CONFIDENT I AM THAT I CAN MAKE YOU HAPPY, HINA-SAN.


WITH THAT IN MIND,
WOULD YOU PLEASE TAKE SOME TIME AND RECONSIDER ?
THINK ABOUT WHAT'S BEST FOR YOUR FUTURE.

MINI SPOT
OH!
IT'S HINA-NEE.
IS SHE ON HER WAY TO WORK?
GUESS SHE HAS THE MORNING SHIFT TODAY.
HUH?
SHE'S KINDA TOTTER-ING.
SHE LOOKS A LITTLE PALE, TOO...
HINA-NEE!
ARE YOU GOING TO WORK?
KSHH
OH...
MORNING, NATSUO-KUN.
ARE YOU OKAY? YOU DON'T LOOK SO GOOD.
HUH ...?
YEAH, I'M FI—
WOBL

SLUMP
HINA-NEE!
...SO, SHE'S RESTING FOR NOW.
YES.
OKAY.
THANK YOU.
ARE YOU SURE YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT GOING IN LATE?
MAYBE YOU SHOULD TAKE THE DAY OFF.
I'LL BE FINE ONCE I REST FOR A LITTLE BIT.
I'M PROBABLY JUST TIRED.
I HAVEN'T BEEN SLEEPING WELL LATELY.
THEY SAID IT'S OKAY IF YOU COME IN LATE.
THANKS. SORRY FOR THE TROUBLE...
BLUE WHALE

...
ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU LOSE SLEEP OVER IT?
ARE YOU STILL WORRIED ...
...ABOUT HIM?
BLUE WHALE
KNOWING YOU,
I BET YOU'RE BOTTLING EVERY-THING UP AGAIN...
...BECAUSE YOU DON'T WANT TO WORRY ANYONE,
OR YOU DON'T WANT TO EMBARRASS TSUKIKO-SAN.
LISTEN.
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS,
I'LL ALWAYS BE ON YOUR SIDE, HINA-NEE.
I'M SURE THE LAST THING TSUKIKO-SAN WANTS IS FOR YOU TO SUFFER, TOO.

YEAH.
THANKS...
THANKS FOR THE MESSAGE!
I WAS ECSTATIC WHEN I GOT IT. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME *YOU'VE* ASKED *ME* OUT.
HINA-SAN!
I'M GUESSING I CAN EXPECT SOME GOOD NEWS TODAY.
WHY DON'T WE TALK OVER DINNER?
NO.
THAT WON'T BE NEC-ESSARY.

ALL OF THE GIFTS YOU'VE GIVEN ME AND A CHECK FOR MY SHARE OF THE MEALS UNTIL NOW.
WHAT'S THIS?
FOR THE DINNERS, I LOOKED ONLINE FOR A GENERAL RANGE...
...AND INCLUDED A LITTLE EXTRA, JUST TO BE SAFE.
I REPLACED THE WHISKEY SINCE I OPENED THE BOTTLE YOU GAVE ME.
I'M SORRY FOR EVERY-THING UNTIL NOW.
IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...
BUT I'M AFRAID I HAVE TO DECLINE YOUR OFFER.
I'M SORRY,
YOU WERE RIGHT.
I SHOULDN'T HAVE CONTINUED TO SEE YOU WITH SUCH HALF-HEARTED FEELINGS.
I DEEPLY REGRET THAT.

BUT SHE THINKS THIS WILL BE ENOUGH TO WIPE THE SLATE CLEAN?
SILLY GIRL.
NOT ONLY WAS HER ANSWER FOOLISH,
HEH, HEH.
AS IF I'D BE ABLE TO LET YOU GO THAT EASILY,
MY BE-LOVED.